

Libby Community Advisory Group

Meeting Summary

February 8, 2001

Introductions

Gerald Mueller and Libby Community Advisory Group (CAG) members present introduced themselves. The CAG accepted as a new member, Joyce Baeth. Ms. Baeth is a member of the Libby City Council. A list of the members in attendance is attached below as Appendix 1.

Agenda

Mr. Mueller reviewed an agenda for this meeting including the following topics:

- Presentation by Dr. Holian
- Draft Health Benefit Plan for Libby Asbestos Exposure
- Funding Request for Insulation Removal
- TOSC Subcommittee Report
- Agency Reports
 - EPA
 - ATSDR
 - Lincoln County
- Public Comment

Correction to the January 25, 2001 Meeting Summary

DEQ's John Podolinsky asked that two changes be made to the January 25, 2001 meeting summary. First, under the DEQ report on page 5, Mr. Podolinsky's program name should have been listed as Asbestos Control Program. Second, on page 6, Mr. Podolinsky's response to the CAG member question should have read, "The indoor standard is 0.01 fibers per cubic centimeter."

Presentation by Dr. Holian and Dr. Putman

Dr. Holian

Dr. Black introduced Dr. Andrij Holian who in turn introduced his colleague Dr. Elizabeth Putman. Dr. Holian heads the Center for Environmental Health Sciences in the School of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences of the University of Montana. Dr. Putman is a UM faculty member who works in the Center. Dr. Holian stated that the Center pursues research in three areas, respiratory and auto-immune system disease, neurological disease, and genetic and molecular disease. Dr. Holian and his Center colleagues plan to conduct research on asbestos disease in Libby.

CAG Member Question - We have heard before that not much is known about tremolite asbestos. Is that correct?

Answer - We know that the chemistry of tremolite is different than other forms of asbestos. The literature reports that it is a more potent form of asbestos, but why is not known. Tremolite is rare, and Libby is the first instance of a concentrated exposure to tremolite asbestos that is being investigated. The Center intends to use a mouse model to simulate asbestos-related disease in humans. We intend to expose mice to different forms of asbestos to learn about their relative potency, how tremolite acts as a disease mediator, and how it stimulates auto-antibodies. We also hope to develop disease markers.

CAG Member Question - What about tremolite and other forms of inflammatory diseases?

Answer - The relationship between asbestos and inflammatory or auto-immune system diseases is not well understood. The lung is the only organ other than the skin that is exposed directly to air. Inside the lung is a large surface area at which gas exchange between the air and our blood occurs through passive diffusion. For this exchange to occur, the lung surface must be kept clean. Macrophage cells clean the lung surface. Asbestos kills one type of the macrophage cells, but not the type that activates our immune system. Thus asbestos may be involved in stimulating auto-immune system disease. By gathering data from Libby people, we intend to study, among other things, the relationship between asbestos and auto-immune disease. Specifically we will be asking for twelve volunteers from this community to provide biological samples from their lungs as well as blood samples.

Audience Member Question - How would the lung samples be taken?

Answer - Sample donors would be given a general anesthesia. A tube would be introduced into the lung through which a sterile saline fluid would be introduced. The same amount of fluid would then be withdrawn through the tube. In this way biological samples can be obtained inside the lung where the disease occurs.

CAG Member Question - Are you looking for specific people to take these samples from?

Answer - We want people who are recently diagnosed and are early in the disease so that we can follow disease progression. Other characteristics such as age are not as important as disease progression.

CAG Member Question - What factors such as sex, race, nationality, etc., matter in the development of asbestos-related diseases?

Answer - We don't know. The literature doesn't say. Women appear to be subject more frequently than men to auto-immune system diseases.

CAG Member Question - Libby has 60 to 70 reported cases of lupus. What should be the typical number of lupus cases for a community of our size?

Answer - I don't know. We may be able to obtain national disease frequency.

Dr. Putman

Dr. Putman explained that her area of expertise and interest is in human genetics. She stated that small changes in genes and the proteins they code for can cause significant changes at the organ and body level. By comparing the lung and blood samples, Dr. Putman hopes to develop biomarkers in blood that can be correlated with disease progression. She noted that people exposed to asbestos react differently. Some people do not develop disease. By understanding how the difference in reactions at the genetic level and how disease progresses, it may be possible to arrest the disease.

CAG Member Question - Will you be looking at synergistic effects such as smoking?

Answer - We will be taking detailed medical and exposure histories in an attempt to account for such synergies. Smoking causes different cancers than asbestos exposure. Cancer is a very complex process involving both initiators and promoters. Smoke particles may be adsorbed onto asbestos particles, so that the simultaneous combination of smoking and asbestos exposure

may promote the incidence of smoking-related cancer. Such a synergy is now only an unproven idea.

CAG Member Question - Could asbestos exposure also promote other cancer inducers such as effluent from an asphalt plant?

Answer by Dr. Holian - Tobacco smoke is the worst pollution one is likely to experience. Asphalt plant emissions would cause a much lower, but potentially continuous exposure. To act as an promoter, asbestos exposure probably would have to be simultaneous with other cancer sources. One has to weigh the economic benefits of an asphalt plant with the risk of any pollution it may produce.

CAG Member Question - People were exposed to asbestos in Libby as infants, children, and adults. Will you be able to breakdown your research among these categories?

Answer - We hope to. The exposure histories are very important.

Audience Member Question - How much fluid will be injecting into the lung during your sampling?

Answer - When taking the biological samples from lungs, we will be injecting a total of 300 milliliters (about a half of a cup) of sterile saline in six increments of 50 ml. In other words six different injections and withdrawals of 50 ml will occur in each sampling session.

Audience Member Question - Instead of doing the injections and withdrawals inside the lung, can't you just use sputum?

Answer - No. We must sample inside the lung.

Comment by Dr. Black - The lung sampling is very important to understanding the disease, and I hope people will volunteer to be tested.

CAG Member Comment - You spoke of studying the disease to possibility arrest it. This is our first ray of hope.

Response - The disease begins at the molecular level and is manifested at the organ level. Only a handful of investigations are taking place at the molecular level.

Draft Health Benefit Plan for Libby Asbestos Exposure

Rick Palagi spoke on behalf of the Medical Trust Subcommittee which includes Kerry Beasley, Sandy Wagner, Leroy Thom, Gayla Benefield, Cyrus Lee, Carrie Dedrick, and John Rider. He stated that the draft plan, which was passed out at the January 25, 2001 CAG meeting, was prepared by Intermountain Administrators under the direction of the subcommittee. Mr. Palagi stated that the draft plan's most important provisions are on pages 14 which addresses eligibility and 18-29 which address coverage. He then asked for questions and comments from CAG members and the audience. A summary of the questions and comments follows.

CAG Member Question - What is the significance of the material that is highlighted in the plan?

Answer - The highlighted words are changes made to an earlier draft.

CAG Member Question - Would the plan be administered locally?

Answer - It is assumed that the plan administrator would be a local body.

CAG Member Question - Is it the intent to cover people under this plan who were exposed to asbestos elsewhere, or just in Libby?

Answer - The intent of the plan is to cover people who were exposed here.

CAG Member Question - Would the plan provide coverage for people who were exposed here, but have moved away?

Answer - Yes. The plan provides that eligible people can receive treatment where they live, or if necessary receive funding so they can travel for treatment.

CAG Member Question - If auto-immune system diseases are determined at a later date to be caused by asbestos exposure, would they be covered?

Answer - Coverage is provided for asbestos-related disease as determined by the local physician. Ultimate decision making authority rests with the plan administrator.

CAG Member Question - Page 4 of the draft plan specifies a set monetary coverage limits. Would these change over time?

Answer - The plan administrator can change the coverage limits as necessary.

CAG Member - The documentation required on page 14 should be clarified.

CAG Member Question - How will the plan be funded, and what happens if W.R. Grace declares bankruptcy?

Answer - We need a further discussion about funding options to pursue. The obvious sources would be W.R. Grace, Congressional appropriation, and private philanthropy. We hope to accumulate a large enough principle that annual plan expenses would come from interest on the principle.

CAG Member Comment - The better the plan, the easier it will be to fund.

Rick Palagi closed this topic for this meeting by inviting further questions and comments on the draft plan to any member of the Medical Trust Subcommittee. Mr. Mueller committed to including a discussion of the draft plan and funding ideas at the March 8 CAG meeting.

Funding Request for Insulation Removal

Sandy Wagner read a draft letter prepared by the subcommittee which included herself, Dr. Black, Don Wilkins, Kerry Beasley, and George Bauer. She stated that the letter would be sent to the Secretaries of the US Departments of Health and Human Services, Interior, and Labor, the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, Governor Martz, Senators Baucus and Burns, and Congressman Rehberg.

CAG Action - The CAG voted unanimously in favor of a seconded motion to send the seven letters, and seven signature pages, one for each letter, were passed around during the meeting so CAG members could sign them.

TOSC Subcommittee Report

Rick Palagi reported on behalf of the TOSC Subcommittee which included himself, George

Keck, Kirby Maki, Don Wilkins, and Clinton Maynard. After meeting with Kevin Mellot, Assistant Project Manager for Technical Outreach Services for Communities (TOSC) at Montana Tech, the Subcommittee proposed that the CAG request the following five services from TOSC:

1. Conduct a needs assessment of CAG members individually to identify questions of concern, suggested areas needing further research and educational programs.
2. Determine the baseline understanding of:
 - a. The role and scope of EPA's work in Libby;
 - b. The role and scope of ATSDR's work in Libby; and
 - c. Asbestos related disease.
3. Research the advantages and disadvantages of superfund designation and make a recommendation concerning it to the CAG.
4. Determine the role of TOSC that would be most beneficial.
5. Prepare an action plan for utilizing TOSC services.

CAG Action - The CAG unanimously approved a seconded motion in favor of this five-fold request, and asked that the TOSC Subcommittee continue to work with Mr. Mellot to oversee TOSC's actions. Rick Palagi asked to be excused from the Subcommittee, and George Bauer volunteered to take his place.

EPA Report

Duc Nguyen, EPA On-Scene Coordinator, reported that Paul Peronard could not attend this meeting because of a training session.

Minneapolis Cleanups

In response to questions at the last CAG meeting, Mr. Nguyen determined that EPA has not removed any attic insulation at its cleanup site in Minneapolis. Twenty-one properties at the site have been cleaned, but only removal of contaminated soils from gardens and driveways has occurred. Twenty additional properties will be similarly addressed.

Phase 2 of the Residential Sampling

Mr. Peronard and Chris Weis will be in Libby in two weeks to conduct interviews to identify twelve homes for phase two of the residential sampling. Three types of sampling will occur. In some of the homes, routine household activities will be monitored during a two to three day period. Air quality will be monitored through a personal air pump worn by a person in the house during routine activities and through a stationary pump in the living area. In other homes, air quality during major cleaning activities will be monitored. Finally, in some of the homes, simulated remodeling activities conducted by EPA personnel or its contractor will be monitored. In the latter, activities such as wiring changes or installation of a ceiling fan will be simulated in one home without and two with asbestos-contaminated ceiling insulation. In these homes, three hours of air monitoring will be conducted prior to the simulated activities, and three hours of monitoring will follow the activities to ensure that no contamination remains after the simulation. Air monitoring of garden rototilling will occur in August when conditions are expected to be dry.

CAG Member Question - If homes are found to have excessive concentrations of asbestos, will the residents will be allowed to reoccupy them?

Answer - No one can return to their homes until EPA determines them to be safe. That is the purpose of the post sampling air monitoring. EPA will relocate people if their homes are determined to be unsafe.

CAG Member Question - How long will it take to get the results of the air monitoring so that EPA will know whether the home is safe to occupy?

Answer - EPA will have a mobile lab on site; eight to twelve hours will be required.

CAG Member Question - What homes can qualify for the phase 2 sampling?

Answer - Homes tested before, and a mix of homes with and without vermiculite insulation will qualify.

CAG Member Question - What will happen if the three hour pre- or post-simulation monitoring finds asbestos concentrations above EPA's action levels?

Answer - EPA will look at relocation until the houses are cleaned up. (Paul Peronard will clarify this issue at the next CAG meeting.)

Access Mediation

Mr. Nguyen reported that the court ordered mediation between EPA and W.R. Grace concerning access to the mine for disposal of asbestos-contaminated materials was not successful, so the case has gone back to Judge Malloy for a ruling. The timing of that ruling is not known.

Maki Letter

Kirby Maki read a memo he is sending to EPA. See appendix 2. The memo informs EPA that running tracks at both the high school and middle school were surfaced in the past with vermiculite contaminated with asbestos. After eight years of use, W.R. Grace notified the school district of the contamination and recommended that the track surface be removed or encapsulated. The high school track was then encapsulated, and the middle school surface was removed and replaced with uncontaminated materials. In his letter, Mr. Maki requests that EPA conduct tests at the two tracks and then develop and implement a plan for removing any contaminated material and back filling under them with clean material. The high school track surface should be replaced with an all-weather surface. He also asked that EPA assess the effects of children running on the tracks during the eight year period in which the surface was contaminated.

CAG Member Question - Will EPA clean up the two track sites?

Answer - EPA is constructing the budget for this year's cleanup activities. We will add to it funds to determine the human health exposure at these sites.

CAG Member Comment - The risk assessment is supposed to be completed by this summer, but you will not sample gardens until August. I am confused about the timing.

Response - The timing of the risk assessment is controlled in part by the need to peer review the assessment methodology. Once it is approved, we should be able to apply it to the results of the garden sampling to determine what actions, if any, should be taken regarding the gardens. (Chris Weis will clarify timing of the risk assessment at the next meeting.)

CAG Member Question - Who acknowledged back in 1982 that the school tracks posed a health risk?

Answer - A 1982 internal W.R. Grace memo acknowledged the risk.

CAG Member Question - Did Lincoln County encapsulate the high school track by paving it?

Answer - Yes.

CAG Member Question - Did the County know that the track was contaminated before paving it?

Answer - Yes.

CAG Member Comment - In EPA's Minneapolis cleanup, stoner rock was found to be highly concentrated with asbestos. I have talked with a former worker at the screening plant, and stoner rock was not separated from vermiculite insulation used in Libby homes. EPA should not, therefore, sample only the top of attic insulation. The heavier stoner rock may have settled, and EPA should take samples to account for this fact.

Response - Thank you for this information. EPA will take it into account.

ATSDR Report

Dan Strausbaugh, Montana Representative of ATSDR, reported that this week 881 letters explaining medical screening results will be mailed tomorrow. Another 1,000 will be mailed February 26 or 28. By the end of the month, some 4,000 letters will have been mailed. Mr. Strausbaugh reported that ATSDR has released for public comment, a document reviewing the scientific literature describing the relationship between exposure to tremolite-related asbestos and resultant health effects. He made available some copies of the document and announced that copies are available at the EPA Information Center in Libby. Comments can be provided to local ATSDR staff who will then forward them to ATSDR's Atlanta headquarters. Mr. Strausbaugh also stated that Dr. Lybarger will be reporting next week to Montana's Congressional delegation the preliminary analysis of the medical screening results. Dr. Lybarger will then present this same information to the CAG at its February 22, 2001 meeting. The results presented to the Congressional delegation will be embargoed, meaning that they will not be released publicly until the CAG meeting. Finally, concerning the American Public Health Association meeting in October in Atlanta, Mr. Strausbaugh said that he forwarded the CAG's recommendation that a panel of people from Libby be invited to present the situation regarding the asbestos exposure in Libby. However, his agency did not accept it, and asks instead that the CAG recommend one person to attend the meeting and present the Libby situation. The CAG decided to take up this request at a future meeting.

Lincoln County Report

Commissioner Rita Windom passed out to the CAG and audience, a copy of a draft ordinance concerning the asbestos situation. She described the draft ordinance as complex and comprehensive. The County will publish the draft officially in the *Tobacco Valley News* on February 15, and will publish it two weeks later in the other local newspapers. The County will hold a public meeting on the draft ordinance on March 7 at a time and place to be announced. It will likely take action on the draft at this meeting after receiving the public comments. Ms. Windom stated that questions or comments from CAG members can be provided to the Commission.

CAG Member Question - What happens after the ordinance is approved?

Answer - If the ordinance is approved the formal investigation it calls for will begin.

CAG Member Question - Will the options include a criminal investigation?

Answer - Not in the beginning phase. Whether criminal investigations occur depends on what is learned during the formal investigation and on action by the State of Montana.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 22, 2001 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in the Ponderosa Room of the Libby City Hall. The agenda will include, as well as the normal agency reports, a report by ATSDR's Dr. Lybarger on the preliminary results of the medical screening.

Appendix 1

CAG Member Attendance List

February 8, 2001

Members	Group/Organization Represented
Don Wilkins	Lumber & Sawmill Workers
Sandy Wagner	
Rita Windom	Lincoln County Commissioner
Ron Anderson	Lincoln County Environmental Health
George D. Keck	Libby Resident (Alternate for Bob Dedrick)
K.W. Maki	Libby School District #4
Bob Tunis	Lincoln County Economic Development Council
Mike Switzer	Asbestos Victim
Joyce Baeth	City of Libby
George Bauer	City of Libby
Rick Palagi	St. John's Lutheran Hospital
Andrij Holian	University of Montana
Elizabeth Putman	University of Montana
David F. Latham	The Montanian
Duc Nguyen	EPA On-Scene Coordinator
Dan C. Strausbaugh	ATSDR/Montana Office
Norita Skramstad	Asbestos Victim
Gayla Benefield	LCAVRO
Leroy Thom	Former Grace Employee
Brad Black	Lincoln County Health
Wilbur Wilson	Lincoln County Council on Aging
Clinton Maynard	Area Asbestos Research Group
John Constan	Montana Department of Environmental Quality
John Konzen	Lincoln County Commissioner
Kerry Beasley	St. John's Lutheran Hospital

724 Louisiana Avenue

Libby, Montana 69923

Superintendent

293-8811

Business Office

293-8813 Special

Services 293-8815

LIBBY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MEMO

To: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
 Paul Peronard, On-Site Coordinator
From: K.W. Maki, Superintendent
Subject: High School and Middle School Tracks
Date: February 6, 2001

Libby School District #4 is extremely concerned about the WR Grace mill tailings on both the high school and middle school tracks. The tailings contain a concentrated level of tremolite, asbestos. Since the tracks are in need of repair or replacement, the mill tailings pose a huge health and financial problem in the near future. A brief history of the high school track follows:

The track facility was constructed at the high school in the early 70's and originally used some red crushed gravel for fill. However, it did not out, so we searched for other suitable material. Cinders were next to impossible to procure and an all-weather track surface was not financially feasible. A worker at WR Grace told us of the vermiculite substance and how effectively it was being used at WR Grace as their dam. The dam held their tailings and it packed quite well, as well as being able to withstand weight as evidenced by the vehicles driving on it. A school official was invited to visit and check out the site. It was determined that the material could probably work as a surface on the track.

Shortly after that visit to the site, WR Grace started transporting the vermiculite in their trucks from the mine site to the high school track. The vermiculite remained as the track surface for approximately eight years. During this time nightly practices were held on the track as well as track meets hosted by LHS.

In 1982, the Superintendent of Schools received a call from the WR Grace Business Manager informing him that the vermiculite on the tracks posed potential problems as it had tremolite asbestos fibers in it, which could be medically harmful (see attached letters). He made it clear that we couldn't keep the vermiculite track in its present state. He gave two options:

Number One, WR Grace would come and remove the vermiculite fill or Number Two they would pay to have the vermiculite encapsulated. After consulting with school officials and coaches, the second option, encapsulating the vermiculite, was recommended.

In 1983, with the assistance of the Lincoln County Road Department, blacktop was hauled in and laid on top of the vermiculite base. That spring the track team had to run

in flat shoes (no spikes) due to the asphalt base. Then during that summer (1983) Action Courts of Minnesota laid an all-weather rubberized surface on the track. During, the spring of 1984, the first practices and meets were held on the new track.

Due to the condition of the tracks and the potential liability (health and financial), Libby School District #4 is requesting the implementation of an action plan for both the High School and Middle School tracks.

- 1. Tests Conducted**
- 2. WR Grace Tailings Removed**
- 3. Base Fill Material Replaced**
- 4. Asphalt Track Replaced at the Middle School**
- 5. All-Weather Track Reinstalled at the High School**

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

K.W. Maki
Superintendent of Schools